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FYI.....

Earthjustice today announced a lawsuit against the Trump administration over its failure to disclose documents related to its monthslong review of dozens of national monuments, aiming to dislodge records, maps and other information used by Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke in his recommendations to the president.

The lawsuit, which names the Interior Department, Bureau of Land Management and White House Council on Environmental Quality as defendants, asserts that the Trump administration has withheld public records sought from a half-dozen environmental groups via the Freedom of Information Act.

"The Trump administration continues its onslaught against America's national monuments, hoping to cover up its misdeeds by blocking public access to information crucial to the protection of these iconic places," said Earthjustice attorney Yvonne Yuting Chi.

Earlier this year, President Trump ordered a review of all monuments created since 1996 via the Antiquities Act. A leaked report shows Zinke recommended the White House move to slash the size of at least six monuments and make management changes to a handful of other sites (Greenwire, Sept. 18).

Utah lawmakers revealed last week that Trump plans to reduce both the Bears Ears and Grand Staircase-Escalante national monuments, although he did not detail his plans. He is expected to visit the Beehive State in early December (E&E News PM, Oct. 27).

The White House has yet to announce whether it will follow Zinke's recommendations on reducing the Cascade-Siskiyou National Monument in Oregon and California, Gold Butte National Monument in Nevada, or Rose Atoll and Pacific Remote Islands marine national monuments.

"National monuments preserve America's historical heritage, stunning wilderness, geologic wonders and priceless cultural sites — and they're meant to be protected for future generations under the Antiquities Act," Chi said. "But the Trump administration wants to pretend that the laws of the land have changed. The American people have the right to know the fate of these magnificent places that belong to all of us, and we are taking these agencies to court to get answers."

Earthjustice is representing the Southern Utah Wilderness Alliance, Natural Resources Defense Council, Wilderness Society, Grand Canyon Trust, Sierra Club and Great Old Broads for Wilderness. The lawsuit cites seven FOIA requests seeking documents related to the review of the Bears Ears and Grand Staircase-Escalante monuments, as well as a final report on Zinke's recommendations.

"It's important that the public knows who had the White House and Interior Department's ear to push the president to dismantle Bears Ears and Grand Staircase-Escalante national monuments," said Southern Utah Wilderness Alliance Legal Director Steve Bloch. "We also expect this lawsuit will shed light on the information and factors the White House Council on Environmental Quality and Interior Department considered as part of Secretary Zinke's 'monuments review.'"

An Interior Department spokeswoman referred questions to the Justice Department, which declined to comment.

Zinke has previously said his recommendations would protect the lands while also providing "a much needed change for the local communities who border and rely on these lands for hunting and fishing, economic development, traditional uses, and recreation" ([Greenwire](#), Aug. 24).

Earlier this year, the Center for Biological Diversity filed its own lawsuit asserting the Trump administration had failed to respond to its FOIA requests for documents related to the monuments review ([E&E News PM](#), Aug. 9).

The Idaho-based environmental law firm Advocates for the West also filed a lawsuit against the Justice Department last month over documents it had sought via a FOIA request. That lawsuit alleges DOJ is withholding documents that discuss whether Trump has the authority to reduce or rescind national monuments under the Antiquities Act of 1906 ([Greenwire](#), Oct. 12).

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